

This chapter presents a synthesis of recommendations from the report to increase levels of bicycling and walking to schools.

It was learned that attitudes toward bicycling and walking and programs to increase those activities vary as children get older. The following grade-related programs are recommended.

- **Grades K-2** - It was clear that most parents were reluctant to let children in this age-range walk or bicycle to school in any conditions. Walking school bus programs, where groups of children are led with competent adult supervision, are the key means to increase walking to school for this age group.
- **Grades 3 to 6** - This age group is more independent and can walk, and in some cases bicycle, to school by themselves. This age group needs safe facilities such as sidewalks, crossing guards, separated paths, and paved shoulders. This age is appropriate for focus of bicycle programs such as “bike trains” (where children can learn safe bicycling technique by being part of a group), and bicycle safety programs should be directed toward this age group.
- **Grades 7 to 8** - This age group should be able to independently walk and bicycle to school in most instances. They need good facilities for bicycling and walking and encouragement.
- **Grades 9 to 12** - While this age group has the physical capability and judgment ability to negotiate most walking or bicycling traffic situations, they need to be more strongly encouraged to do so. Distance is often a prime deterrent with regional high schools, but there are always some students within reasonable bicycling and walking distances. High school students should also be challenged to reduce private motor vehicle use and use the school bus, or at least carpool whenever possible.

The following recommendations are directed toward how each of the particular stakeholders can play a key role in increasing bicycling and walking to school.

Local municipalities:

- Establish bicycle/pedestrian committees to comprehensively study and prioritize bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements near schools
- Provide some measure of adequate funding to construct new sidewalk and repair dysfunctional sidewalk in each year’s capital budget
- Add paved shoulders to local roads near schools where feasible
- Establish traffic calming measures on local streets in the vicinity of schools where needed
- Enforce speed limits and crosswalk laws, particular during times of travel to school
- Examine local planning and zoning regulations to require new subdivisions to include sidewalks and paved shoulders where needed, and to encourage higher residential density near school locations

School districts:

- Provide bicycle and walking friendly school campuses with safe biking and walking paths on campus, and attractive, functional bicycle storage provided near the school entrance
- Separate students bicycling and walking from school bus and automobile drop-off areas as much as possible
- School site health coordinators can work to develop walking and bicycling programs in the schools and conduct walkability and bikeability audits in the school vicinity
- Advocate to appropriate state and local entities for improved infrastructure improvements for bicycling and walking to school. Appendix B contains a sample letter from MSAD 51 which participated with the local municipality

to receive funding for improved conditions to bicycle and walk to school in North Yarmouth.

- Examine school bus policies, and require students living only a short distance from school or bus pick-ups to walk or bicycle wherever it is possible
- When siting new schools to consider the ability to bicycle and walk to school as an important factor

Maine Department of Transportation:

- Implement its draft sidewalk policy that uses proximity to schools as an important factor in adding a sidewalk to an existing project
- Continue to construct paved shoulders of adequate width near school locations
- Develop a Maine Safe Routes to School Program that would provide a funding program where local municipalities could apply for infrastructure improvements that would enhance opportunities for children to bicycle and walk to school. Such a program is proposed for the 2004/2005 budget period.
- Become more highly involved in the school siting process by looking at the whole gamut of transportation issues involved in a school site location

Maine Department of Education

- Continue to work with the State Planning Office on school siting regulations that can encourage neighborhood schools
- Elicit more input from the Department of Transportation, Bureau of Health and State Planning Office in school siting decisions

Maine Bureau of Health

- Continue to fund school site health coordinators and encourage them to get involved in increasing walking and bicycling to school as part of their physical activity promotion

General Public

- Hold public agencies accountable to providing facilities for children to bicycle and walk to school wherever possible. Appendix B contains a sample letter from a North Yarmouth resident that successfully resulted in improved conditions.
- Support speed reduction efforts near school locations